

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 673

By Cohen

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of the legendary Sam  
Phillips of Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the death of Sun Records founder Sam Phillips; and

WHEREAS, born in Florence, Alabama on January 5, 1923, Sam Phillips was most famously noted for being the record producer who discovered and launched the career of The King, Elvis Presley, and thereby helped to usher in the rock 'n' roll revolution; and

WHEREAS, Sam had his own compass, and with it he was able to find, synthesize, and create the rockabilly and rock 'n' roll sound which the world of music loves. Quite the original, Sam was a very unique individual. As Sam said, "For God's sake, let's don't become conformists, please. You can be a nonconformist and not be a rebel...and you can be a rebel and not be an outcast." Peter Guralnick, a legendary rock 'n' roll historian once quoted Sam saying, "'If you're not doing something different, you're not doing anything.' Sam Phillips was always doing something different"; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1950s, at his first studio at 706 Union Avenue, Sam Phillips recorded such legendary stars as Howlin' Wolf, whom Sam considered the greatest talent with whom he had ever worked, B.B. King, Bobby "Blue" Bland, Rufus Thomas, Ike Turner, James Cotton, and Jackie Brenston. It was in that same historic site that Mr. Sam Phillips recorded what was widely acknowledged as the first rock 'n' roll record, Jackie Brenston's "Rocket 88"; and

WHEREAS, after founding Sun Records in 1952, Sam Phillips began producing many new talents, beginning with Elvis Presley's first record in 1954, the single that featured "That's All Right, Mama" and "Blue Moon of Kentucky"; and

WHEREAS, after his success with the young Elvis Presley, Sam Phillips signed such immortal entertainers as Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison, Conway Twitty, and Charlie Rich to his label; and

WHEREAS, he opened a new studio at Memphis' 639 Madison Avenue in 1960; and

WHEREAS, in 1962 Mr. Phillips got out of the recording business and sold Sun Records in 1969 to producer Shelby Singleton; he dedicated the latter part of his career to radio, spending much of his time overseeing WLVS, a radio station in Memphis, and other stations in Alabama; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Phillips began his career in music as a radio station sound engineer and later as a disc jockey. Attracted to the association between country music and black blues in the South, he started Sun Records so he could record both rhythm & blues singers and country performers, those artists with no formal training, and provide a forum in which they could play their music as they felt it, raw and full of life; and

WHEREAS, he has been honored for his acumen in the music business in a variety of ways, including being inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in 1986, the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2001, and featured in a two-hour biography on the A&E cable network called *Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock and Roll* in 2000; and

WHEREAS, duly noted for his expertise in the music industry, which ultimately helped put Memphis on the map of musical talent and industry, Sam Phillips has been recognized on the Music Highway (I-40 East) near Jackson, Tennessee at the Carl Perkins/Sam Phillips Welcome Center. The stretch of road in downtown Memphis from 706 Union Avenue, where Sun Records is situated, to the corner of Madison Avenue, where Sam Phillips Recording Services exists today, has been given the Honorary Name of "Sam Phillips Avenue"; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Phillips was the proud father of Knox and Jerry Phillips, who have followed in the footsteps of their father; together, they shared an exemplary father-son relationship; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sam Phillips leaves behind an indelible legacy of creativity, industriousness, diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, on July 30, 2003, the music didn't die, as Don McLean would have penned, but the music certainly stopped, paused, reflected, and expressed thanks for the creativity of Sam Phillips; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Sam Phillips, reflecting fondly upon his unique character and special style, his renowned raconteur qualities, his vast knowledge of talent in the music industry, and his stalwart commitment to living a full, fun, and productive life.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Sam Phillips.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.